

The John Freeman Saga, Vol I: At the Top of Lungs

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Summary: Read Squirrelking's Half Life: Full Life Consequences like never before.

1. Chapter 1

****The John Freeman Saga, Volume I: At the Top of Lungs****

_(Author's note: ****READ****) This is based off Half Life: Full Life Consequences by squirrelking, which is a "so bad it's good" ff. If my story seems weird, it's supposed to be (read squirrelking's story first). I'm not too familiar with the Half Life games, so if I accidentally butcher the canon, I apologize (but that's pretty much the definition of the original story__). And remember, reviews are appreciated, and encourage me to update faster!_

****Chapter 1****

It was almost noon in the city. All around people began stirring outdoors, headed to restaurants and coffee shops for their lunch break. Most of them walked, which left the streets relatively quiet, probably the quietest they would be before rush hour.

At the center of downtown the tallest skyscrapers stood, monuments to corporate achievement. Their southern sides were illuminated with the midday sun, its heat reflected on the city below. Farther out the lesser businesses had to jostle for prominence in smaller structures. Near where the commercial zones ended and apartments began to dominate the streets, there was a smattering of office buildings in need of repair. It was one of the cheapest places in town to rent office space, and most of the area displayed that fact. Litter was a constant problem, and the road needed maintenance dollars that were being spent elsewhere.

It was in one of these buildings, a five-story box of concrete and plain windows, that John Freeman worked. His office was on the third floor, overlooking the sorry scene below. At the moment, John was

staring into his computer monitor, doing what he did most days: trying to keep his barely-fledgling accounting firm from going under. It was tedious work, but it was the career he had stumbled into.

Freeman Accounting was the proud employer of four people, sharing a spread of cubicles with two other businesses on that floor. John's personal office was one of the few extravagances he could afford, but one that he couldn't was a secretary. He handled most of his sparse scheduling himself, or dumped it on a subordinate if he didn't feel like it.

Clients were tough to come by when your office looked like the product of an architecture school dropout. Luckily, computers made it easy to gain customers while keeping your office safely out of view. The price of that blessing was spending long hours on the computer, rounding up advertising opportunities. John was online doing just that. Or rather, meaning to do that. Today he could find no interest in his work. _Now would be a good time for a vacation,_ he thought. _Why can't something exciting happen?_

After realizing that he hadn't actually gotten any work done in half an hour, John decided to check his email. It would provide a few minutes of welcome distraction. He didn't usually check his personal email when he was working, but today (like a lot of days recently) would be an exception. He fired up his web browser and went straight to Gmail. After logging in, he opened the inbox.

The first message was from his insurance company, telling him about some new policy that he desperately needed. _Yeah, I'm sure I'll die if I don't get more health coverage._ John scrolled down the list, not bothering to open any of the messages just yet. There was a notification that one of the blogs he followed had posted recently. A friend had sent him a PM on Facebook. His mother had written him. As he was breezing through the rest of the new messages, the last one caught his eye. It was from Gordon Freeman.

Gordon wrote? Good, I haven't heard from him in weeks. John's older brother was pretty much the opposite of him when it came to careers. While John had been bouncing around between jobs for years, Gordon had gone to MIT. After years there he graduated at the top of his class with a Ph.D. in physics. The two of them had been close for their entire lives, even while college separated them. After college their lives had taken very different paths. While John finally got a degree in the accounting world, Gordon was off studying the limits of science. For years he had worked at Black Mesa, the world's premier scientific research facility. His job seemed to be going great, until the big accident. How Gordon escaped from that place John had no idea. John asked him once, but got no response. Gordon didn't like to talk about his time at Black Mesa, and John soon learned not to ask.

But still the two of them stayed in touch, even as Gordon removed himself from civilization. He had taken to living near Ravenholm, an abandoned city hundreds of miles from where John lived. It had good reason to be abandoned: the creatures from Black Mesa now infested the place. John often wondered if Gordon lived there because of some fascination with the creatures he had apparently encountered before. In any case, email was usually the only way they kept in touch. John clicked the message and read the first line.

John, I'm in trouble.

His mind came to a complete stop. _What could that mean?_ John thought. He continued reading.

It started last night. Those creatures. They're in greater numbers than I've ever seen. I'm stuck out here, they're blocking the way out. I'm trying to hold them back, but they keep coming. Please, help me! I have to go,

Gordon

John stared in disbelief. He had known that the monsters caused trouble occasionally, but Gordon could always handle it. If he was calling for help, he must really be in trouble. John sat still for a whole minute, staring at the computer screen with his hand on his forehead. _What am I supposed to do?_ He asked himself. _If it's as bad as he's implying, then I can't take them all on by myself. Maybe I should call the army—| no, Gordon told me never to let the authorities know where he is. Something about the trouble at Black Mesa. But what can I do?_

His mind was racing when he realized the true gravity of the situation. Gordon couldn't go to anyone else for help. John was the only one who could respond. And aside from his own wife and son, Gordon was almost the only family he had. At that moment John Freeman knew what he had to do.

He hit his computer's power button, not bothering to shut it down properly. Shoving his chair aside, he strode through his office door and barged past the cubicles, hastily telling one of his employees that he was leaving and didn't know when he would be back. Coming to the elevator, he impatiently hit the "up" button until the doors slid open. Moments later he was on the top floor, where he dashed for the roof access.

John's mild friendship with the building manager allowed him a few benefits, and the most important was letting certain things against policy slip by. Outside the door opening onto the roof, John yanked a tarp off a large object to reveal a jet-black motorcycle. It was one of his oddities, keeping that thing all the way up here. It had been a pain to fit in the elevator, but he had done it; and the vehicle had waited up here for months. An employee once asked him why he bothered to keep his motorcycle on the roof instead of in the parking garage. John told him not to ask stupid questions.

From the motorcycle's luggage compartment John pulled a bundle of clothes, which he quickly unwrapped. A shirt and tie wasn't exactly ideal for riding, so he kept the change of clothes with his motorcycle. A minute later John stood with jeans and a leather jacket replacing his old clothes, a wool cap on his head. Now he felt ready to tackle the open road.

So he could get off the roof in a hurry, John had installed a ramp that faced the alley in back. It was positioned at an angle so he wouldn't crash into the adjacent building when he tried to use it. The building manager had complained when John installed it without permission, but twenty dollars had shut him up.

The motorcycle started with a roar, and John maneuvered it into alignment with the ramp. For one last time he checked to make sure he had everything he needed. He didn't have time to go out and buy food; but he had money, so he could buy it on the way if he needed to. Throwing his right leg over the vehicle and getting on, he paused one last time. _This isn't going to be easy,_ he thought, _but I've got to do it anyway. Freeman is my name, and I've got to free Gordon from the danger he is in. It's time for me to face the consequences of living up to my family name!_

John gunned the motor and pulled his foot off the ground as his motorcycle leapt forward. He crouched behind the windshield as he reached the ramp and launched into the air, keeping a vise grip on the handlebars as he and the motorcycle backflipped. John braced himself for the jolt of the tires connecting with the ground. Once he landed, John gunned the gas again and went zipping down the alley and onto the street. A car swerved to avoid him, but he didn't have time to stop and apologize. He made a beeline for the highway, and in minutes he was on his way out of town.

The roar of the wind filled his ears as John left the city and rode into the rural surroundings. He glanced around occasionally, just to make sure that there were none of the monsters from Black Mesa to get in his way. As John sped off towards Ravenholm and away from his home his thoughts were with Gordon. _Don't worry, bro. I'm coming!_

2. Chapter 2

****The John Freeman Saga, Volume I: At the Top of Lungs****

****Chapter 2****

John Freeman held his head up and laughed into the wind as his motorcycle sped through the countryside. He closed his eyes as the wind blasted past his face, filling his whole body with exhilaration. Lowering his head and focusing on the road again, John smiled as he raced along the twisting country highway. He knew his mission was dire, but riding again after so many months of the same office routine made him feel alive again. John didn't ride nearly as much as he used to since settling into family life, and already this quest of his was looking to be a much-needed change of pace.

The mountainous landscapes around him were drenched in the warm glow of sunset. Only a few clouds graced the evening sky, along with flocks of birds silhouetted against the pale blue as they flew home to their nightly roosts. As John took in the scene around him, he thought to himself that though there was never a _good_ day to be saving your brother from certain doom, today was the best kind of day you could manage. There was no traffic to be seen, and he could go as fast as he wanted.

_I probably _should_ be going faster_, John thought to himself. The frequent turns didn't lend themselves to speedy driving, but at this rate he wouldn't be in Ravenholm until morning. _Not that Ravenholm at night is a good place to be!_ Still, Gordon needed him there right now; so he pushed the throttle all the way forward as he pulled onto a straight stretch of highway. Now the wind was getting too fast to hold his head up, so he stayed down behind the windshield.

After a good hour, and just as he was wondering if he had enough gas to get through the night, John heard a whining noise. It was faint, barely discernable over the roar of the wind. Could something be wrong with the bike? What was it? John didn't have to wonder for long; the blue and red lights he soon saw in the rearview mirror provided the answer.

"Aw crap", John muttered as he glanced behind him. There was the blue car of the state patrol, its sirens blaring as they both barreled down the road. _How long has he been following me?_ John couldn't remember what the speed limit was, but if he was obeying it then either the department of transportation was run by biker gangs or people having to save their brothers in Ravenholm was a much more common problem than he thought.

Being pulled over would take up time John didn't have, but there was no avoiding it. Either he stopped and listened to the lecture or he risked having a dozen patrol cars on his tail in ten minutes. He eased up on the gas as he drifted to a stop next to a dirt turnoff that angled off into the woods. The police car likewise slowed before halting twenty feet behind his bike. John looked back, but he couldn't see anything in the car's dark interior. By now the sky had darkened to the point where it was getting hard to see anything that wasn't close by.

John tapped the handlebars in irritation as he waited for the cop to come out and give him the ticket. Why did they spend so much time in their cars before they came out? Was it to figure out all the ways they were going to bust you, or was just to piss you off? John figured it was the latter; but he remembered he wasn't wearing a helmet, and that probably wouldn't go over well with the officer.

Finally the patrol car's door swung open. John gazed over his shoulder as a figure in tan clothes eased out onto the ground. The officer didn't bother to close the door, but slowly started limping towards the bike. _Oh brother,_ John thought, _did they hire some 80-year-old onto the patrol? Why's he going so slow?_ He turned back forward to wait. _Maybe he's just drawing this out to annoy me. He probably wants to make absolutely sure that I-_

"Giveâ€¦ ticketâ€¦" a raspy voice said from his left. John jolted a bit as his thought was interrupted, but when he turned to look at the officer he fell backwards in surprise. The officer had no face: the front of his head was a bloody bulbous mass. John scrambled to his feet as the officer began lurching around the bike. "Youâ€¦ speedingâ€¦" the officerâ€¦no, the _thing_â€¦uttered. As the figure swiped at John with a bloody arm, he jumped back, keeping a good distance between the two of them. Now that he could see the twitching, insect-like legs on the sides of the officer's face, John recognized the headcrab. Gordon had told him about them once. They latched onto your face and made you a zombie, a mindless walking eating machine. So why was this one talking? Gordon never mentioned them talking. But then, Gordon didn't tell him very much.

John kept backing away from the thing, trying to think of the best way to get rid of it. The thing uttered more hoarse words as it followed. "Give meâ€¦ licenseâ€¦"

Should I try communicating with it? John wondered. _Well, it can't

hurt._

"Umâ€¦ are you saying you want my license?"

"Give licenseâ€¦ to meâ€¦" it responded.

"I can't give you my license," John replied as he began angling around the zombie. He had one very good advantage over the creature: a .45 pistol in the luggage compartment of his bike. He just had to get to it without the zombie getting to him.

"Why notâ€¦ give licenseâ€¦" the headcrab zombie asked.

"Well for one, BECAUSE YOU'RE A HEADCRAB ZOMBIE!" John yelled as he dashed around the monster. Or at least, that's what he planned to do; but he misjudged the distance. The zombie managed to lunge out just enough to trip him as he went past. As John went sprawling onto the dirt, the zombie bent over him, getting ready to feast on his flesh. _Oh no you don't!_ John flipped onto his back and kicked the zombie in the side of the head, all in one relatively-fluid motion. The monster stumbled back, giving John time to scramble back onto his feet and bolt for his motorcycle. He flipped the luggage compartment open and pulled out a gleaming pistol and a full clip that he shoved into the gun. Cocking it as he turned around, he was caught off-guard, finding that the zombie had closed the distance quicker than he expected. The thing ambled into him as his arms flew up in defense. An erratic shot fired into the sky just before the gun left his hands and went sailing into the ditch by the side of the road.

Disarmed, John crashed into the ground, the headcrab zombie coming down on top of him. This time he was facing up, and as the zombie thumped into him he swung a punch into the side of its head. His fist connected with the headcrab itself as its putrid smell filled his nose. He hoisted the zombie up with his left arm as he shoved it off him by its neck. The thing flopped onto the ground to John's left, freeing him to dive towards where his gun had fallen. The barren ditch was filled with only some dry, half-covered grass, and John found his pistol easily enough. Turning onto his back, he saw that the zombie had reared up and was about to dive onto him where he lay, but he didn't let that happen. John fired at the thing's head, his bullet piercing the headcrab and sending a fine spray of slime into the air. He pulled the trigger again and again, emptying the entire magazine. The zombie staggered backwards as the shots hit home, and when they ceased it teetered for just a second before crumpling to the ground.

John panted as the feeling of adrenaline slowly left him. Momentarily he eased forward onto his feet and climbed out of the ditch. Stepping over to the corpse of the zombie, John looked it over. Sure enough, it was dead (if that was the right word). As John looked up the road he wondered how long it would be before someone found the scene. _No, no worrying about that now; Gordon's still in trouble._

He tossed the gun back into the luggage compartment as he wiped the ooze from his beard. It would take a while to wash out, but he had more important things to do. His bike again roared to life; and he left the scene behind, disappearing down the road and into the spreading darkness.

3. Chapter 3

****The John Freeman Saga, Volume I: At the Top of Lungs****

****Chapter 3****

Ravenholm.

If the sight of the half-collapsed buildings amidst lifeless and bloody streets didn't make it obvious enough, the road sign declared it for all who saw: Welcome to Ravenholm. Not that there were many to see it, John Freeman thought grimly. He stood in front of the sign that welcomed all of zero people every year to the town that stretched away from the hill on which he stood. From this vantage point John was afforded an unblocked view of the entire burnt and desolate wreck of a city. The main road heading down the hill disappeared amongst the mess of ruins, where many of the streets were clogged with debris.

John also saw what was written beneath the sign's white-lettered welcome. Someone had scrawled "You shouldn't come here" in black paint, and the quality of the handwriting showed that they had been in a hurry. John guessed that there were many things in this town to make one hurry.

Now where am I supposed to find Gordon in all that? John thought as he gazed over the town. His brother hadn't been very specific about where he was hiding out, but perhaps John could just look for monster activity. But that was the strange thing about the town: no activity. Gordon had described himself as unable to leave, but it didn't look that way to John, at least not at the moment.

Suddenly John's ponderings were interrupted by a scream. It echoed across the expanse of the town before dying out. It was Gordon. John would know his brother's voice anywhere. But where did it come from? It sounded like it was far off, maybe on the other side of town. John didn't wait long enough to think about it. He hopped on his motorcycle and raced down the hill, dodging whatever debris lay in his path as he entered the city. At one time a barrier had been set up just ahead, and the remains blocked the road completely, so John was forced to turn onto a side street. With a start he saw his first problem up ahead.

Headcrab zombies were limping into the road from alleys on both sides of the street. They immediately began spreading out in a line stretching from building to building. And they were all heading right for him. John had a chilling moment of realization. _They were waiting for me._

He reached for the brake handle, but an idea stopped him. Up ahead he saw a sheet of metal leaning on a pile of debris between him and the zombies, forming a ramp. John didn't have much time to think about it, but he liked the idea. And when his ideas were this cool, he usually carried them out.

Lining up with the impromptu ramp, John gunned the motorcycle and leaned forward. As the bike hit the metal ramp, he pushed off the foot rests and pulled up on the handlebars, starting the bike spinning. Letting go just as it became airborne, John spread his arms

out to control his own speed as his bike went sailing forward. Rolling as he hit the pavement, he looked up just in time to see his bike land right on a cluster of zombies, sending them flying in all directions. Excellent, John thought as he smiled to himself, now to take out the others. About a dozen zombies still remained, but his pistol would make short work of them. Pulling the weapon from the holster where he now kept it, John aimed it at the closest zombie's head and pulled the trigger.

Click.

That wasn't good. Click, click the gun went again as he tried to get it to fire. Slapping the thing in frustration, he suddenly remembered his encounter with the headcrab cop the previous evening. What he couldn't remember was reloading afterwards.

Crap, John thought as he patted his pockets, looking for another clip. With another chill he remembered where he usually kept them: in his motorcycle. That was fifty feet away, and there were a dozen zombies thirty feet away and getting closer. With no option left, John ducked into an alley to his left. Okay, he thought, it's simple; I just have to draw the zombies this way and angle around back to the bike. With that he looked back and saw that the zombies were already entering the alley behind him. It was working!

John dashed to the next cross street and began to turn right, but halted when he saw what was ahead of him: not a dozen, but a hundred headcrab zombies. Even the ammunition from his bike wouldn't have been enough. Luckily he had the edge when it came to speed, so he made full use of his advantage and ran from the zombies as fast as he could.

How was he going to save Gordon when he was in this mess himself? Maybe I should leave and come back with bigger firepower. No! Gordon could be dead by then. If only I could find some weapons around here.

Looking back, the crowd of zombies had swelled to hundreds, an ambling sea of bloody, faceless ghouls. John picked up the pace and ran, twisting in and out of side streets, making his way towards the other side of town. He was thinking of stopping to catch his breath when his foot caught on something, sending him sprawling. He cursed and turned back to untangle his foot, but when he saw what he had tripped over, his mouth gaped open at his discovery.

Dead shrubs poked up from a crack in the pavement, dry and brittle. Even the weeds didn't survive in Ravenholm. But that wasn't the discovery: lying next to the plant was a gun. John muscled his foot from the entangling foliage and pulled out the weapon. It was some kind of machine gun, with a long magazine sticking out of the bottom. John checked it. It was full! He grinned to himself as he looked over his find. This would give him an edge over the zombies for sure! It wouldn't take out all of them, but John began to wonder if there might be more weapons nearby. The closest building was a small two-story house. The windows were boarded up, and the paint was faded and chipped, but you never knew what secret cache someone might have been keeping.

Dashing to the door, John was pleased to find it unlocked. Shoving it open, John found that the first floor had been stripped of all

furniture and was packed with crate after crate, some stacks even reaching the ceiling. John pried open the nearest one to find brick after brick covered in green wrappings. It was the words on the wrappings that made John's day: "C4 â€" Highly Explosive"

John looked around in amazement. Did all these crates have the same contents? He opened several more and found the same green-covered bricks inside. Now this is something I can use! A quick look around produced a remote detonator and blasting caps. As he ran back to an open crate, something clanked beneath his feet. Looking down, he found a trapdoor. Curious, he pulled it open to find an access tunnel stretching away underground. As John stared down the passageway, another idea began forming in his mind. A quick dash down the dark corridor confirmed his suspicion, and he was soon back in the house, sticking the appropriate wires in one of the C4 bricks. With that done, he exited the house, ready to carry out his plan.

He had timed it just right. Already the crowd of zombies was closing in, and he strode up to them, cocking his machine gun and ready to fight.

"Zombies!" yelled John. There was no response from the bustling mass. "Zombies!" he yelled again, "leave this place and I won't kill you!"

A rasping noise that might have been laughter rose from the crowd. "Usâ€| leave? Noâ€| thisâ€| our homeâ€| youâ€| becomeâ€| one of us!"

John Freeman stared at them. He wondered how they could be cognizant enough to speak in that state. A terrifying image flashed through his mind: day after day of being trapped in a body controlled by some alien freak of nature. Was that what they went through? If it was, then he was about to do them a favor. He raised the machine gun and fired it in bursts, taking out several zombies each time. The ones that fell simply got covered as the ones behind them pushed on towards their target. John kept shooting, and it made them angry. That was exactly what he wanted. With the exhilaration of automatic weapon use, John ran back through the door, locking it from the inside. Outside the zombies began surrounding the building, pounding on the sides in a mindless effort to get in. Soon the entire mass of them joined in the effort, forming a great circle of undead with the house at the center.

Two minutes later John emerged from the tunnel a quarter-mile away. The shack it had once led to was now no more than four half-standing walls, but you couldn't expect much else in a town like this. The land rose just a bit where John stood, allowing him a barely discernable view of a swarm of human shapes amongst the ruins. There was only one thing left to do. John crouched behind a nearby house, sticking the safety key into the detonator. He covered his ears as he pressed the red button.

Seconds later the earth trembled with a deafening blast that rattled the few windows that remained in the surrounding structures. The noise soon subsided, and John got to his feet and looked back where he came from. There was nothing but smoke and scorched earth where the house once stood. The crowd of zombies was completely gone. John breathed a sigh of relief as he looked over the city. But his gawking was interrupted by another scream behind him. It was much closer than

the one he had heard earlier, and he grasped his weapon as he charged towards it. _Come on Gordon; don't let me be too late. If you're screaming it means you're still fighting!_

On the outskirts of town John came across an open field, nothing but dirt and a few dead trees. The forest was still green in the surrounding hills, but that wasn't what held his attention. He was staring at the two figures in the center of the clearing.

4. Chapter 4

****The John Freeman Saga, Volume I: At the Top of Lungs****

****Chapter 4****

There was his brother in the middle of the clearing. Gordon was a good fifty feet away, but even from that far it was obvious he was in rough shape. His hair was disheveled, and his posture was slumped. The orange of his HEV suitâ€"something from his Black Mesa daysâ€"made him conspicuous against the background of dead trees. Here John had reached his goal of finding his brother, but surprisingly enough Gordon was not the most eye-catching thing in John's vision.

To his brother's left was a floating mass of sinewy grayed flesh, tendrils of who-knows-what hanging off the bottom. Two appendages that could have been spindly arms were held out in front of it, with two finger-like protrusions on each. Above this all was the head, and that's what startled John the most. The thing's head was more massive than the whole rest of its body; it was a wonder the thing could keep it upright. In the center of what was probably the face, gaping black pits sat above another empty hole, making what could be considered eyes and a mouth. All in all it looked exactly like the type of monster John wouldn't fight for a million dollars. But Gordon was worth more than a million.

John watched in amazement as Gordon dodged balls of light hurled at him by the monster. Where they struck the ground dust blasted upward, leaving black burn marks. Gordon rolled out of the way of one and struck the thing with a crowbar. The hooked end sank into the pale flesh; green blood spurted out as he yanked it out again. Though there were a number of such wounds on the creature, they didn't seem to be having any effect. On the ground were several assault rifles and a pistol, apparently dropped when their ammunition ran out. As Gordon rolled away from another attack, he happened to look up, and his eyes met John's.

"John, over here!" Gordon yelled, his face lighting up. _What am I doing?_ John thought. _My brother's fighting for his life and I'm standing here gawking!_ John sprinted forward, bringing his weapon up. The monster was dead ahead, and Gordon was to its right, so John flanked left as he fired the gun into the thing's head. That got its attention, but did little else other than make it angry. John weaved back and forth as he dodged the creature's attacks, circling around it clockwise. As he had hoped, his distraction gave Gordon a chance to strike at the thing's back. The monster groaned in response, spinning around to face Gordon. The crowbar was ripped from Gordon's grasp, still embedded in the thing's flesh. That probably would have been the end of Gordon if John hadn't charged into the thing from

behind. Even he wasn't exactly sure what he was doing; he just had to keep that thing's attention away from his brother. As he hit the monster's backside with a spray of bullets, it began floating in a circle around him. John was so focused on keeping it in the sights of his machine gun that he wasn't prepared for the blast of light that almost crashed into him. While he managed to jump back just enough to keep it from hitting him, the explosion of the shot slamming into the ground sent him flying.

Somewhere in his flight John let go of his gun, and when he came crashing into the ground all his senses were blurred. Somewhere his brother shouted his name, but John was too foggy to tell from where. Somehow the world came back into focus, and John staggered up. Off in the distance Gordon was running around the monster, landing a punch whenever he could, but it was obvious he was losing. John looked around for his gun and found it lying at the foot of a dead tree on the clearing's border. He picked it up and got ready to run back into the fight, but he had no idea what to do.

This thing's a tank! Bullets don't hurt it, there's no weak spot, and there's no way to get at any vital parts. He began running back to his brother, but suddenly he stopped. _Unlessâ€¦_|_ As he stared at the monster, an idea sprouted in his mind. _Yes, this just might work!_ Running forward again, he switched his weapon from automatic to single shot.

"Gordon, look out!" he shouted at his brother, who was between him and the monster. Gordon looked back, apparently as surprised as the monster that John was on his feet. He jumped to the side as the monster prepared to dispatch its foe for the last time. But John stopped short as the thing charged at him. Bringing the gun up again, he fired at the pits where its eyes should have been. His first shot missed and hit the forehead, a trickle of green blood sprouting from the pale flesh. The monster was undeterred, but John's second shot flew straight into the left pit.

The thing staggered back as its moan shook the surroundings. John fired again with equal success, taking out the other eye. Apparently they _were_ used for sight, because now the monster was flailing its arms around, clutching at the dark holes as streams of ooze poured out. John turned to Gordon. "Now! Now's your chance!" Gordon was staring in amazement at the success of John's attack; but he snapped out of it, charging forward one last time. "It's time to end this!" Gordon screamed as he jumped off the ground. His HEV suit launched him up at the creature's head as he drew his arm back. The thing never saw him coming.

Gordon's fist flew into the monster's forehead with a sickening crunch as he punctured the creature's skull. The HEV suit gave Gordon extra strength as his arm sank into the monster's brains. The thing howled like an animal for just a moment before falling silent. Whatever Gordon had hit must have been vital, because the monster began to tip over as Gordon pulled his arm out and jumped off. The monster ceased levitating, and crashed to the ground in a plume of dust, dead.

John's pulse finally began to normalize as he stared at the corpse. It didn't pop back up, it didn't start twitching; it was really dead. The breath he had been holding he let out sharply as he looked over at his brother. Gordon was staring at their defeated enemy, slouched

in exhaustion. In a moment he turned to John, a smile sprouting on his face. The two brothers embraced, giving each other plenty of slaps on the back. Gordon's arm was still covered in slime, and it got ooze all over John's favorite riding jacket; but John didn't even care. He didn't care about anything except that his brother was safe. The two pulled apart as John asked if he was all right.

"I'm fine now," Gordon replied. "You aren't hurt, are you? I thought that blast had killed you!"

"Nothing can kill me that easy!" John declared. "So what was that thing anyway?"

"I don't know. I encountered something like it at Black Mesa, but I have no idea where this one came from."

"Huhâ€¦ Well, I'm just glad I could help," John replied, gazing at the corpse. "Why do you think there was so much monster activity around here?"

"I don't know. The Black Mesa incident was caused by an experiment gone wrong, but I have no idea what caused this breakout." Gordon looked around in thought. "I feel like this isn't just a random happening. I think something big's going to happen."

"Well, the next time anything like this happens, I can come save you again," John said with a smile. "That is, if you can't handle it yourself."

Gordon was quite for a moment, but then asked, "Fine. But the next time I need saving, could you get here earlier?"

The two of them laughed. Not just at the joke, but also because they were happy to be alive. John spread his arms out and stretched, but suddenly he felt the ground shake. Gordon felt it too. Then they felt it again, and again; and it was getting stronger. Soon they could hear a boom that accompanied the shaking. John was about to ask Gordon what it could be when he saw something come crashing through the trees at the far end of the clearing. It was tall, with the same bizarre flesh as the creature they had just fought; but this one was much taller. Three spider-like legs held up a central body that was not much bigger than John was, but there was nothing human about it. Something on the front that could have been a head looked around the clearing, and then focused on John and Gordon.

"Bro, look out!" John yelled, pointing to the new creature. Gordon didn't need it pointed out; he was quite aware of it already.

"Run, just run!" Gordon yelled. He and John immediately bolted away from the creature, making for the cover of Ravenholm. As John reached the edge of the clearing he looked back to see the creature pursuing him, but he noticed something worse: Gordon wasn't following him.

His brother had tripped and was a ways behind, flat on his face. And the monster was headed right for him. John raised his gun, but he had spent the last of his ammunition fighting the previous monster. As he prepared to charge at the creature to attack it, distract it, anything, Gordon looked up. His fear-filled eyes met John's. "No, run! Get out of here!" Gordon yelled. John's brother started to

struggle to his feet, but one of the monster's legs came down on top of him. A spike on the end pierced right through Gordon's protective suit, and the look of pain on his brother's face made John want to vomit. The look lasted for only a moment, and Gordon became still.

As John looked back in horror, his brother's last words rang through his mind. Tears flowed down his face as he turned and ran. The creature didn't follow him, apparently occupied with its kill. Rage and sorrow mixed in John's heart as he passed into the city. "I'll kill you, you monster!" John yelled, not knowing if the creature could even hear him. "If it takes the rest of my life, I'll get you back!"

****To Be Continued****

(Author's note) Thank you for reading! Volume II (an adaptation of "WhatHasTobeDone") will be coming relatively soon to my profile. If you add me to your author alerts, you'll be notified when it's posted.

End
file.